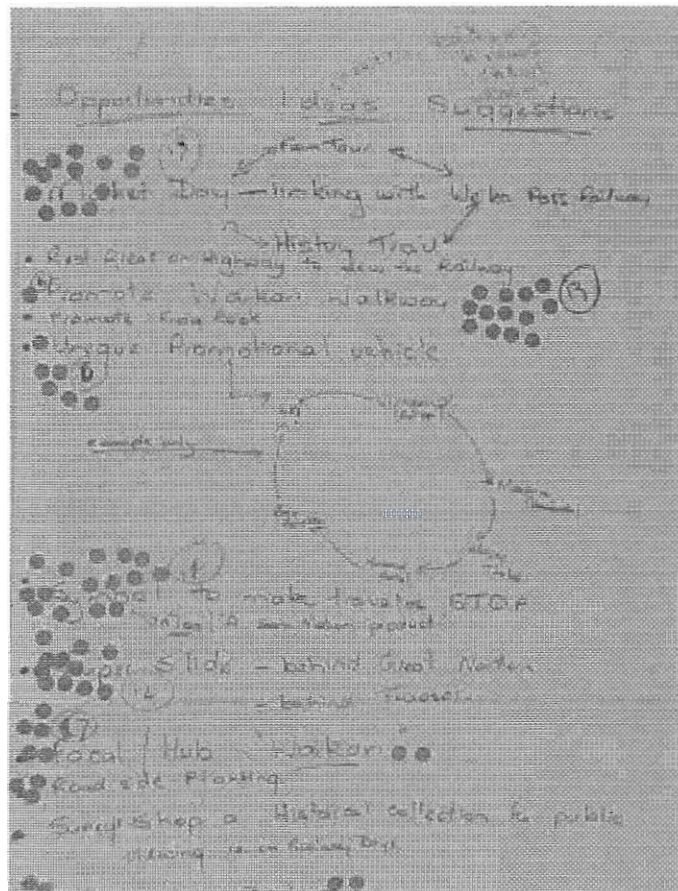


## One small community's first steps to a better future

A Kellogg Rural Leadership Report  
November 2001



# Reviving Rural Communities

One small community's first steps to a better future

Lyndon Matthews

A Kellogg Rural Leadership Report  
November 2001

## **Executive Summary**

Rural Communities around us are dying.

This study identifies that the best way to revive a rural community is by focusing on the community's assets , capacities and abilities.

In New Zealand the Department of Labour's Community Employment Group (CEG) provides a good support network to encourage revitalisation . The change , however , must come from within the community.

Apathy and a lack of self esteem appear to be the greatest limiting factors. The only competitive advantage a community has is the passion of its people.

A healthy community has passionate leadership and a strong support team where they volunteer , collaborate , network and assist each other.

A community in partnership with CEGS and embracing the Enterprise Facilitation concept will be the model for successful regional development in future.

This report outlines a course of action being taken by one rural community.

With Passion anything is Possible.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Communities around us are dying.

Many rural communities are struggling for an existence beyond maintenance and survival.

Symptoms of a depressed or disadvantaged rural community include apathy and a sense of helplessness , why bother ?

Since the sweeping reforms to the agricultural sector in the mid eighties farming people (who often make up the greatest number of a rural community) are now too busy to be involved in aspects of community life , We have tend to become more self-centred , family orientated at best , selfish at worst.

Life is all about change and in society today change is a constant.

Many rural communities being conservative by nature have not always adopted or embraced change as a way forward.

Beneficial changes can move society forward .

## **A QUESTION**

**How do we empower people to believe in themselves and initiate change ?**

This report seeks to look at ways in which a rural community can be revived.

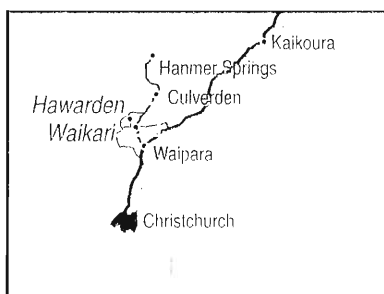
It identifies 3 possible courses of action;

- examines one of these in depth
- with reference to case studies in New Zealand and elsewhere
- details a plan of action for the community
- and looks to the future

# The Gateway to the Hurunui Lakes



Hawarden  
Hurunui  
Waikari



## **BACKGROUND**

The Hurunui is a small locality of some 690 households , within the larger Hurunui District Council , located approximately one hour north of Christchurch.

It has two villages Waikari and Hawarden , some 8 km apart and surrounding rural communities of Hurunui , Medbury , Masons Flat and The Peaks.

The Hurunui District could be described as a disadvantaged rural area - with an outstanding landscape but a fragile environment where the predominant source of income is pastoral farming - prone to droughts.

For many years there has been population decline as farms laid off married couples , school leavers with no work prospects and little qualifications drifted off to town , services supporting the farming sector wound down , struggled on , or closed.

The district's secondary school offers limited subjects for pupils due to insufficient roll numbers to attract greater resources , many families if they can afford to send their children to Christchurch for secondary schooling. This is partly tradition but compounds the difficulties of the local school.

The local rugby team amalgamated with 5 other rural districts , community clubs and organisations (especially voluntary) struggle to find people prepared to take on positions of office , or even become involved.

The A & P show has difficulty getting to get local farmers to support it despite attractive prizes being offered.

Many people have low self esteem and any suggestion of effecting change is greeted with any number of reasons as to why it won't work.



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People talked about the downturn in farming but in reality it was change and the district had not adapted quickly to the change , many still yearning for the good old days - some of the younger people on the land dream of what it used to be like when their parents farmed.

We wanted to change all this , the more I looked around and researched it became apparent to me that Waikari was no different to any other small rural community and yet others appeared to be achieving positive outcomes.

**How could we bring about change in our community and offer hope for our children?**

### **The Way Forward - Initiate Change**

#### **Options for Change**

- **Substantial Capital Investment**
- **Addressing needs and deficiencies ( the "Social Welfare" approach).**
- **Focus on the community's Assets , Capacities and Abilities**

## **SUBSTANTIAL CAPITAL INVESTMENT**

In disadvantaged areas like the Hurunui ( and elsewhere in New Zealand) much of regional development is based on the idea of capital investment - i.e "how do we attract a major new industry ?"

In its embryonic stage is a current proposal to dam the Hurunui River to build a storage lake for hydro-electrical generation and to provide a much needed irrigation scheme for the district.

From the experience of other irrigation projects it is generally accepted that within five years of the scheme becoming operational 70% of the land use will change and 70% of the farms will change hands also. Existing farmers either unwilling or unable to afford to make the change sell out.

I am not certain our district is able to cope with change of this magnitude.

## **ADDRESSING NEEDS AND DEFICIENCIES**

The " Social Welfare " approach to address a community's needs , deficiencies and problems requires considerable financial and human resources.

Efforts to date in New Zealand have had varying degrees of success and there is considerable overseas evidence to suggest that needs based strategy can only guarantee survival , and can never lead to serious change or community development.

## **FOCUS ON THE COMMUNITY'S ASSETS , CAPACITIES AND ABILITIES**

With the pressures on small communities and rural areas in recent years Southland District Council developed a process in order to make a more proactive approach to assisting communities determine their priorities. A process to make more effective use of the limited resources and opportunities available.

This process , Concept Development planning , is all about community input and community ownership - elected members and council staff in the Southland region were merely facilitators of the process. It involved getting all sectors of the community together to collectively look towards the future , to identify ideas and priorities for the area. Southland District Council's role in the process was mainly to provide direction , technical input and resources to move the many innovative ideas , originating from the community , into an actionable plan. The actual implementation of the projects and the suggestions identified in the planning process is dependant to a large degree on community effort and local resources.

Kretzmann and McKnight in their book **Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path towards Finding and Mobilising a Community's Assets** state that *"historic evidence indicates that significant community development takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort."*

The reverse of this has certainly been the experience in our community - where the community has handed its collective responsibility over to the council - nothing gets done , and the council is considered to be at fault because nothing gets done.

Any suggestion for an improvement is cried down on the suggestion that the council wouldn't approve , or has no money/would put the rates up so why bother ? A public meeting we held suggested people would like to see an improvement in their community... how to make that happen?

Kretzmann and McKnight further went on to say "*It is increasingly futile to wait for significant help to arrive from outside the community. The hard truth is that development must start from within the community*".

*"The key to neighbourhood regeneration is an understanding , or map , of the community's assets , capacities and abilities".*

*"Once this guide to capacities has replaced the old one containing only needs and deficiencies , the regenerating community can begin to assemble its strengths into new combinations , new structures of opportunity , new sources of income and control , and new possibilities for production".*

## **HOW DO WE EFFECT IMPROVEMENT IN OUR COMMUNITY ?**

### **Concept Development Planning**

#### **What is in a Concept Plan ?**

Concept Development Plans will differ from community to community but all incorporate:

A profile of the area and townships in the area

A vision , theme and the aspirations and values of the community are identified to provide guidance as to how the

community wants to develop the area in future.

**Concept Plans may also include:**

A "Main Street" enhancement programme.

A beautification plan to upgrade the visual appearance and appeal of the area.

The development of new and ongoing community festivals and carnivals.

Amenities and local services are investigated for new initiatives and improvements including recreational facilities.

Area attractions and activities are developed for residents and visitors alike.

Opportunities for enterprise and commercial development are outlined and campaigns developed to support these.

Tourism and promotional activities are also addressed with the view to further developing the economic base of the area or community.

## **The benefits**

Southland District Council state benefits include

- development of community pride
- increased community participation in local activities
- identification of projects Council can assist with by providing advice , funding or support service.
- allows priorities to be established and the resources of the community used to best effect.
- "helping communities to help themselves"

## **HOW DID WE START ?**

Hurunui District Council's newly appointed Tourism Manager calling a public meeting in Waikari to conduct a SWOT analysis of the area with the view to encouraging the establishment of a promotion group .

This was one of the first steps to **Asset Mapping** the concept of identifying assets within the community.

Discussion identified a number of community assets , many under-utilised

Walkway	Fledgling vineyards/olive groves
Steam train	New medical centre
Maori rock art	One hour from Chch (400k pop)
Moa swamp	2200 vehicles daily on SH7
Rock formations	Talented craftspeople
Hurunui River	A community owned camping
Mountain lakes	ground

## **WHERE DO WE START ?**

The Concept Development process identified that we :

Did not have the infrastructure to encourage people to stop and take advantage of these things

Some of the "assets" themselves needed a spruce up

Then marketing

Have to encourage belief in self

Infrastructure is important but must go hand in hand with building the capacity of the people to utilise these infrastructures.

The community has to see the benefit and have the desire to make these changes.

## **HOW DO WE MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN ?**

By dragging people screaming and kicking into the 21st century?

Community building through consensus , self empowerment and an appreciation of each others assets.

Leading by example.

**The first** , a centralist or local government approach assumes they know what is best for the people. It does not necessarily include the community in the decision making process and almost certainly does not empower the community.

**The next** is the new order or "second wave" , an approach being adopted by more liberal or forward thinking organisations. It could be argued that this is one of the key platforms of the "Triple bottom line " philosophy which is currently gaining favour. Profit is not only measured in terms of money but also of the environment and people.

**How do we find a way to let the community take responsibility for its own economic success , whilst having regard for the people and the environment ?**

## **TWO AVENUES**

- The community establishing a relationship with a Department of Labour's Community Employment Group fieldworker.  
The role of the Community Employment Group (CEG) is outlined in more detail on page 18.
- Through Enterprise Facilitation - a process developed by Ernesto Sirolli over 17 years from 1985. Enterprise Facilitation is outlined in detail on page 24.

**The third way** - leading by example is probably the quickest especially when carried out by individuals or other forms of private enterprise.



K I W I A N A



W A I K A T O N E W Z E A L A N D

One particularly outstanding example in New Zealand is Henry Clothier in the town of Tirau , South Waikato.

Tirau went from a thriving town to a forgotten drive through after the restructuring of New Zealand in the mid eighties.

In 1989 Henry Clothier opened an Antique shop in Tirau , with clean toilets and selling delicious smelling coffee.

There are now 13 eating places in Tirau , a number of antique shops , many other small businesses all feeding off the 15,000 vehicles passing through Tirau each day. But it is not just the through traffic , Tirau has become a destination in its own right.

Henry's philosophy includes:

- - "Build and they shall come".
- - clusters of identical enterprise (the antique shops in Tirau).
- - Become a destination not a drive through.
- - "Success breeds success".
- - A motivated leader must have support.

As evidence of his success property values in Tirau have increased significantly whilst values in the neighbouring South Waikato towns of Tokoroa and Putaruru have fallen by a similar magnitude. Henry Clothier is landlord to many of the successful businesses now operating in Tirau.

## **WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR IN OUR COMMUNITY ?**

Following on from the Asset mapping process and the printing of a district promotional map our informal group quickly became aware that in our current form we had limited abilities.

One of the issues was having no money to fund further activities. We learnt that a formal structure is necessary in order to obtain grants etc from various providers (Lotteries commission , Community Trust etc) and to gain recognition.

## **ESTABLISHING A LEGAL ENTITY FOR THE GROUP**

A website [www.community.net.nz](http://www.community.net.nz) includes a Community Development Resource Kit , a very good starting point for any community group setting up. We had to decide on an appropriate legal structure for our community group :

either an **Incorporated Society** ,

or **Incorporated Charitable Trust.**

Working on the philosophy that " *A light boat is a fast boat* " (Rob Hamill , TransAtlantic record breaking rower) we opted for a Charitable Trust structure. This required a minimum of two trustees , few positions of office and basic compliance requirements. Given that we had very limited numbers and a desire to keep the structure as user friendly as possible to encourage community participation this was a more appropriate structure than an incorporated society.

## **HURUNUI GATEWAY COMMUNITY TRUST**

Eight people agreed to become trustees and so the Hurunui Gateway Community Trust was formed.

The purpose of the trust was for district improvement , and to empower the people.

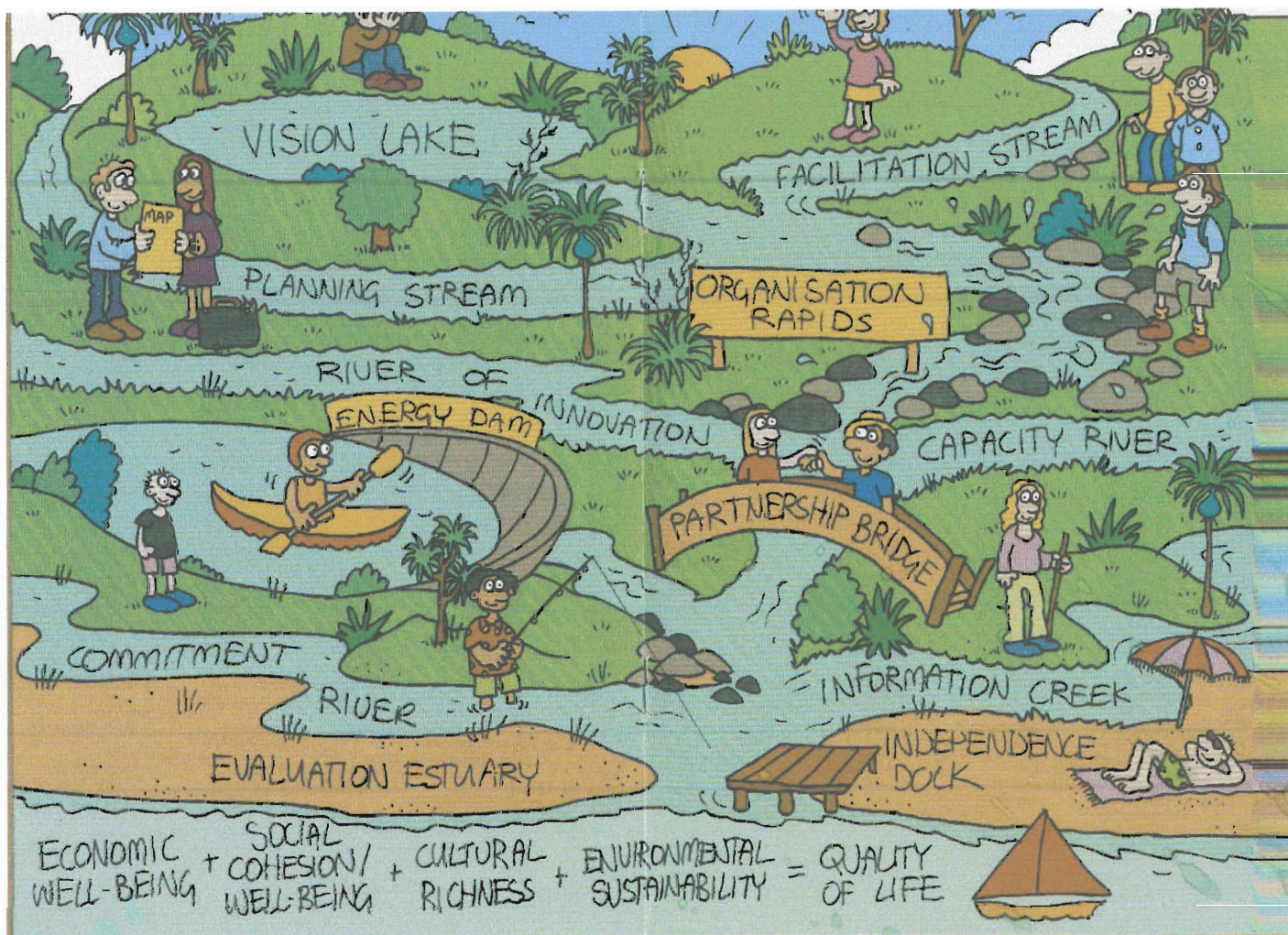
Its mission statement : *"To unlock the potential of the district and its people."*

Now we needed to find outside support to develop a business plan and seek funding to undertake projects we had in mind.

### **The Partnership : CEG**

Whenever any discussion on other progressive communities arose so to did the word "CEG" - the Community Employment Group. We established contact with the CEG field worker for our region. The first contact was fairly non-committal , the fieldworker pointed out they were not just a source of funds but expected to work in partnership , to build an ongoing relationship with the community with the aim of creating jobs. Although this was something we hadn't considered we were keen to develop this relationship.





## **WHO ARE CEG ?**

The Community Employment Group are a division of the Department of Labour. With approximately 70 field workers throughout New Zealand their role is to help communities build their capacity to plan and carry out projects which improve their economic and social well being. With an emphasis on enterprise development and employment they work with Maori , immigrant communities , women and disadvantaged rural or urban communities as these groups are considered to face the most difficult employment problems.

Their aim is to encourage self sufficiency.

## **RAISING FUNDS IN A SMALL COMMUNITY**

One of the things that is apparent in our district is the myriad of small groups all trying to fund raise - usually by the form of a raffle , or selling pizzas etc - with the neighbours being visited on a monthly basis and asked to dig buy a ticket . The same people are always selling the raffle tickets and the same people are supporting each time - the money raised is not enough to be significant and nor are the prizes ...so another raffle is proposed !. The two bigger community events in the district are the Hawarden A & P Show in March and the Plunket Flower Show in September. The local Lions also run a 4wd trip as a fundraiser and the schools undertake (usually an offroad motorcycle rally) to raise money. These types of events do bring in some entries (and money) from outside the district.

The Show is profitable to the Association only through the proceeds of 100 gift lambs donated by farmers each year , each entry goes in the draw for a 10 very good sponsored prizes including airfares and accommodation.

Gate sales continue to languish and the association would like to attract more people to its show. Many community groups use the show as a venue for fund raising (selling raffle tickets !)

The other community event , the Hawarden-Waikari Plunket Spring Flower show - was struggling with poor attendance , with a format largely unchanged for 65 years , a lack of new ideas and struggling to make a profit despite a lot of hard work preparing for it. This show consisted of looking at cut flowers for 2 hours followed by afternoon tea , admission , entry fees and afternoon tea all at low prices.

Meanwhile other communities not too far away seemed to be able to organise large and successful fundraising events.

**Waipara Wine and Food Festival** - 3500 people , 35k Gross Income from admissions- the major fundraiser for the Glenmark church and the Waipara Valley Winegrowers Association.

**The Culverden Christmas Fete** - a group of private individuals organise an open air retail experience in a pleasant rural setting. Unashamedly aiming at the top of the market with a Gross Income to the organisers of about 90k.

Further afield **Kaikoura Seafest** - 6000 people , food , wine and entertainment.

**So why not our community ?**

This year one person decided to upgrade the flower show to a Spring Festival , with extended hours , a garden tour , demonstrations , quality stalls of crafts and garden related business , and sponsorship for substantial prizes to encourage people to enter.

The local Stock and Station firm was approached for the use of their very large marquee for the stallholders to display in. An evening function was also considered to maximise the use of the marquee.

Various garden clubs and other groups within Christchurch and surrounding districts were contacted and some advertising carried out.

The hard work , the apprehension - it paid off. Gross takings were up by 125% and profit to the plunket increased threefold.

### **WHAT WAS LEARNT FROM THIS SMALL BUT SUCCESSFUL EVENT ?**

- The local community is not a sufficiently large catchment for successful fundraising , need to attract people from Christchurch (400,000 people , one hour away) and surrounding districts , or capitalise on the 2200 vehicles per day travelling through the district.
- People like a good day out with new quality experiences , and are prepared to pay for it.
- Need three or four people with vision to solely focus on organising the event and not be constrained by a wider collective of opinion.



- funding , need to spend money to make money.
- Marketing , Marketing , Marketing , and the value of editorial advertising goes a long way ( this is free but has no guarantees of being selected for publication).

## **NOW TO CREATE A MAJOR EVENT**

To bring in large numbers of people from outside the community ,

To provide a unique quality experience.

Generate sufficient revenue to assist a number of groups within the community ,

Or to allow for individual groups to do their own fundraising activity leveraging off this large gathering.

A Walking Festival was one of the ideas to come out of the Concept Development process given the outstanding landscape of our district.

A monthly craft market is another possibly to enable the craftspeople within the district to take advantage of the 2200 average daily vehicle movements on Highway 7.

## **BRINGING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER AND ENCOURAGING SELF BELIEF**

Other spin offs apparent from the Spring Flower Festival were the positive feeling generated by a successful event , and the observation that the festival brought many of the community together to socialise at the event and interact as a community. An evening function would have done even more so.

A Northland town that has undergone a transformation in recent years (Employment Matters ; September 2001) spent three years building self esteem before it began to move ahead.

One possibility would be to hold an evening function for the community after an event like the Spring Flower Festival and have a motivational speaker.

Rob Hamill , one of the New Zealanders who won the TransAtlantic rowing race (by 530 miles ahead of their competitors !) stated

*"With Passion anything is Possible"* - and he had never been across an ocean before !

A public brainstorming session as part of the Concept Development process brought a surprisingly good attendance ... and when people were asked to come up with a list of assets in the community they were all very surprised at how much the community had to offer.

When a 10 year visioning process was implemented people were

split into groups to develop their own exciting ideas for the community. The groups all came up with a number of common themes of how they would like to see the community develop. The whole exercise was an important part of building self worth.

## **LEADERSHIP**

One thing the public meeting did highlight - there were very few people under 40 and no teenagers or children at the meeting. The cry of " *Where are our young people - its their future !*" highlighted the issue of a lack of leadership and community involvement coming through in the younger people in the community. It is vital that this be re-established.

In Peter Donovan's article " *A small town looks to its assets*" - the small rural town of Washtucna , Washington , USA had a shortage of volunteers and looked to the local high school students to conduct a door to door survey in the community then present the findings of the survey back to the community. The project volunteers (students) observed that they learnt a number of new skills including leadership and communication skills through carrying out this work and learnt that their community had a lot of assets and opportunities they had not been aware of.

One observer of the Maori people today said that leadership is lacking - that equally applies to rural New Zealand.

Clutha Agricultural Development Board *Strategic Plan ; November 2001* identified the need for training of community leaders and recommended that local and national initiatives need to be undertaken to address this.

Henry Clothier's observation that a motivated leader must have support is echoed by many others. Ernesto Sirolli in talking about encouraging entrepreneurship suggests that an individual needs a team to be successful.

## **HOW TO BUILD ON THE GOOD IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY ?**

**Passion and Entrepreneurship: Development tools for changing a community.**

Ernesto Sirolli has 17 years of experience in **Enterprise Facilitation** with the first successful programme implemented in Esperance , West Australia in 1985 , and many others since in the United States and Canada.

A recent success story is New Westminster , British Columbia where Enterprise Facilitation commenced in June 1999. To date there have been 47 new businesses start up , 151 new jobs , Gross sales of \$22.2m from these businesses and \$4m of capital investment. The cost of the Enterprise Facilitation Programme ? \$200,000 or \$1300 per job created - an exceptionally good return on investment.

The key said Sirolli is to find ways to let the community take responsibility for its own economic success. The Sirolli Foundation teaches Enterprise Facilitation *as the grass roots approach to local development*. It aims to teach civic leaders how to transform individual passion and community activism into rewarding and sustainable enterprises.

How to capture the passion , entrepreneurship , innovation and creativity of local people encouraging them to "*do beautifully what they love to do.*"

Enterprise is not about money or resources. Enterprise is about people.

The training emphasises management teamwork - (which many small businesses lack) and the importance of doing what you love. Self fulfilment is the main driver of successful business development.

Sirolli argues that the right conditions in a community to encourage economic prosperity also encourage the **Civic Economy** - where qualities such as social capital , volunteering and networking exist. The sign of a healthy community is one *where people volunteer , collaborate , network and assist each other. In the worst region people compete , undermine , belittle and backstab each other.*

We have certainly seen evidence of both situations in our community. At the Concept Development Plan brainstorming session one person was heard to comment "*that it had all been tried before*"...

However as the small Washtucna community learnt (Peter Donovan's article : A small town looks to its assets ) *You have to care enough to create change...what you tried five years ago may now be possible. The biggest challenge has been to get people to accept the idea of sharing power. You have to worry about what needs to be done , rather than who needs to be in charge...*

***We are learning how to walk ...***

## **CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS**

- There are rural communities that have been successfully revived and are thriving.
- The focus must be on the communities assets , capacities and abilities.
- The change must come from within the community not “top down”. Communities must want to change.
- There is a wealth of information and support available in New Zealand to assist this process if you know where and how to access it.
- Within our present generation there is a lack of leadership and a loss of volunteers. This needs to be turned around.
- The Sirolli Institute’s Enterprise Facilitation programme provides a way for communities to empower themselves.
- I believe that a community in partnership with CEGS and embracing the Enterprise Facilitation concept will be the model for successful regional development in future.
- Our community has taken its first steps;

***“with Passion Anything is Possible”***

## **References**

Communities of Enterprise: *published in 2000 by Commact Aotearoa , PO Box 145 Westport . email [commact@xtra.co.nz](mailto:commact@xtra.co.nz)*

Who we are - What we do : *published in July 2001 by the Community Employment Group , a division of the Department of Labour.*

Employment Matters - *a monthly publication by the Community Employment Group*

This publication aims to highlight community employment and economic development projects throughout the country and to network employment-related information.

*Available by contacting Abpost PO Box 38756 , Petone , Wellington. Fax (04) 568 3400.*

Ripples from the Zambezi (Title) . *Ernesto Sirolli. Passion , Entrepreneurship and the Rebirth of Local Economies (sub-title). Published 1999 by New Society Publishers , Canada. Available in New Zealand from Scorpio Books, Christchurch.*  
Email [scorpbk@ihug.co.nz](mailto:scorpbk@ihug.co.nz)

Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path toward Finding and Mobilising a Community's Assets *John P. Kretzmann and John McKnight.*

Growing community power *an article by Peter Donovan (May 2001) can be accessed from the website [www.managingwholes.com](http://www.managingwholes.com)*

A small town looks to its assets *an article*  
by Peter Donovan can be accessed from the website  
[www.managingwholes.com](http://www.managingwholes.com)

I wish to also acknowledge my appreciation to Henry and Ann Clothier of Oxford Street , Tirau who kindly gave up a day to show me Tirau revitalised.

## **Web Sites**

[www.community.net.nz](http://www.community.net.nz) - "An internet resource to encourage and support the strengthening of communities in Aotearoa/New Zealand" . Includes a Community Development Resource Kit - a very good starting point for any community group setting up.

[www.managingwholes.com](http://www.managingwholes.com) - has a category "Community and economic development" with a number of articles on community development and enterprise facilitation

[www.ate.co.nz/vagueideas](http://www.ate.co.nz/vagueideas) - a New Zealand website that includes ideas for community development, empowering volunteers , leadership development.

[www.nwu.edu/IPR/publications](http://www.nwu.edu/IPR/publications) - provides the introduction to *"Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path toward Finding and Mobilising a Community's Assets"* by John P. Kretzmann and John McKnight.



## Other Websites

[www.sirolli.com](http://www.sirolli.com)- the website of the Sirolli Institute , a non-profit organisation whose programme of Enterprise Facilitation *continues to attract international attention for its dramatic departure from conventional approaches to regional development.*

[www.bankofideas.com.au](http://www.bankofideas.com.au) - an Australian website featuring Peter Kenyon , a social entrepreneur and community enthusiast. In the last 10 years Peter has worked with over 600 communities throughout Australia and overseas ,*seeking fresh and creative ways to stimulate inspiring and novel approaches to community and economic renewal.*

[www.enterpriseinsight-scotland.com](http://www.enterpriseinsight-scotland.com) - Scottish Enterprise Agency website.

[www.holisticmanagement.com](http://www.holisticmanagement.com) - A starting point into the whole realm of Holistic Management.

**STOP PRESS** - A new resource only just discovered as this report was completed.

[www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/Index.htm](http://www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/Index.htm) or ,  
[www.rirdc.gov.au/eshop](http://www.rirdc.gov.au/eshop) - *A Kit for Small Town Renewal* (refer Employment Matters ; October 2001 for more detail).